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*Let's Strengthen
our*

LOCAL 4-H LEADER TRAINING



PA-395

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FEDERAL EXTENSION SERVICE

Purpose:

This booklet is written to help State and county extension workers hold better local leader training meetings which get results. By better training meetings, we mean those which include the kind of help that leaders need, are attended by those leaders who need it, and are interesting and educational.

In this booklet, we'll try to do two things:

- 1. Encourage the basic extension philosophy of leader development and the part training plays in it.**
- 2. Suggest ways to analyze and improve your leader training.**

We believe that most agents do some leader training and would like to do a better job of it. Some agents do not always recognize the needs of all local leaders. Others train local leaders, but only when the leaders request such help. Oftentimes leaders do not know what is available to them. County agents do need to train local 4-H Club leaders. However, they cannot do it well unless they want to train, know what to train in, and know how.

This booklet is based to some extent on general educational research and Extension Service surveys but it is mainly based on a 4-H Club study in the Western States. During the 4-H Club year 1954-55, we studied the training meetings held for 3,307 local 4-H Club leaders in 33 counties in 10 Western States and Hawaii. In these counties, 304 meetings were observed and attendance records were kept. The counties were chosen by judgment to be representative of all the 410 counties in the Western States as to leader training. The observations were made by persons who know 4-H Club work, such as local leaders, county extension workers, and wives of extension workers.

The study was coordinated and supervised by our Committee, and the data were summarized in the Federal Extension Service.

Western Region 4-H Study Committee:

Howard R. Baker, Assistant Director of Extension, Arizona.
Laura G. Cooley, State Home Advisor, California.
Cecil G. Staver, State 4-H Club Leader, Colorado.
Esther A. Taskerud, Coordinator of Home Economics Programs, Oregon.
C. O. Youngstrom, Associate Director of Extension, Idaho, Chairman.
Laurel K. Sabrosky, Extension Analyst, U.S.D.A., Technical Advisor.

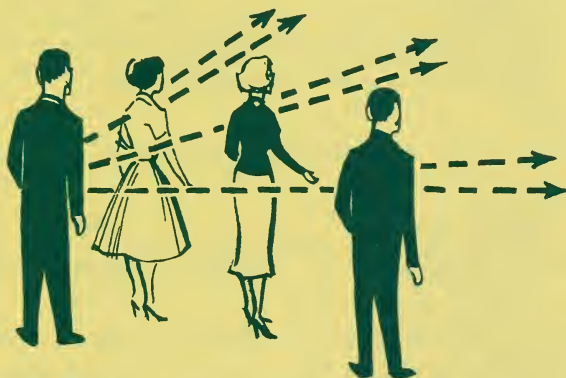
All the committee members have carefully studied the 14-page mimeographed report of this study, plus supporting tables of data. They have also carefully reviewed this booklet and their ideas have been incorporated into it. The mimeographed report is available from the Division of Extension Research and Training, Federal Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D.C.

Issued August 1959

LET'S STRENGTHEN OUR LOCAL 4-H LEADER TRAINING

by Laurel K. Sabrosky and Fern S. Kelley

Conspicuously important in the extension organization and program is the volunteer local leader. The spread of influence of our limited number of extension employees is multiplied or blocked by the way we work with our volunteer local leaders.



We all do our work well if:

1. **We have the personal satisfaction of doing a good job.**
2. **We feel personal security in the job.**

This is true for us extension employees; it is true for volunteer 4-H Club local leaders; it is true for everyone.

Do you have a rapid turnover of your volunteer 4-H Club leaders? Do few of them attend your training meetings? Maybe these symptoms tell you that something is not being done in the best way. These danger signals should lead you to look at your leader-training program. See what has or has not happened in it.

Any local leader needs to have the "know-how" and a desire to do the work we expect him to do. He will have this desire if he feels he is doing a good job and feels personally secure in the job.

**These are means of encouraging
volunteer leaders:**

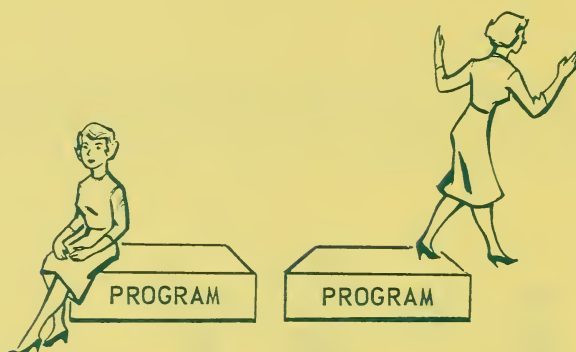
Giving attention to local leaders,
Providing training for them,
Seeing to it that the training is adequate,
Planning the training with the leaders,

Putting on interesting, well-organized,
and prepared-for training meetings.

**These are means of discouraging
volunteer leaders:**

Ignoring local leaders,
Providing no training for them,
Providing inadequate training for them,
Failing to plan the training with the
leaders,

Putting on uninteresting, badly organ-
ized, or unprepared-for training
meetings.



Results?

Volunteers stay with the program
and
Volunteers wish to improve their com-
petencies and take advantage of
training offered them.

Results?

Volunteers drop out entirely
or
Volunteers do the job according to their
own abilities and stay away from
training situations.

**Leaders need to be trained.
Leaders want to be trained.**

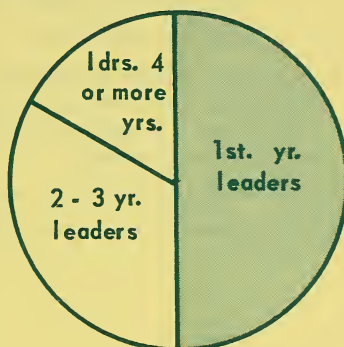
**Are we as extension workers carrying out our responsibility
for training them?**

WHY DO WE THINK TRAINING NEEDS IMPROVEMENT?

Too Many Leaders Quit After 1 Year

One-half of the local 4-H Club leaders in the study were first-year leaders. This meant a 50-percent turnover in local leaders that year.

If this was a usual year, it means that each year, an average county extension staff must conduct the youth program with one-half of their 100 volunteer leaders new to the job. Another one-third of the leaders were only 2d- and 3d-year leaders.



There is a strong possibility that a trained local leader will stay with the program.



Even if a local leader stays only 1 year, he will do a better job if well trained. The study showed that only one-half of the first-year leaders attended any training meetings at all.

4-H Training Meeting Attendance Was Low

Almost one-half—45 percent—of the local leaders in the study attended no county training meetings. How serious is this? Those who did attend went to an average of two training meetings a year. Is this enough? Yes, we have written materials, home and club visits, 4-H events, and several other methods to train leaders. But are these methods enough by themselves?



There are several reasons why meetings are an essential part of the local leader training program:

1. No county extension staff is large enough to give individual training to each separate leader.

The Committee emphasizes this point especially. New leaders need considerable help, both in methods and subject matter. They lack experience and know-how. Leader-training meetings help supply this. You need many hours to help a new local leader get started well. How can you spend all

that time on the same information for each leader individually? The committee feels strong leader-training meetings are the only answer.

2. Experienced 4-H leaders want to hear experiences of other 4-H leaders and discuss them. These "old hands," knowingly or not, are expressing one of the important reasons for training in groups.

In group training all of us can see how other people do things and exchange experiences with them. Also, an experienced local leader oftentimes carries more authority than a professional extension worker.

3. The group situation provides for different points of view and ideas among group members. These differences provide stimulation to change. If you try to train a local leader individually, he is not challenged as much to change. Change is the essence of education.
4. Groups offer support and encouragement for a person to think or feel as he does.
5. It is important to the morale of a person to get group recognition and approval.



Too Few Leaders Received Training at Meetings in Each Area of Training Need

The western study included checking of each training area touched upon during each meeting for the year. Quality of training was not measured.

Even when a training area was touched upon in meetings, only one-fourth or fewer of the leaders received that information because of low meeting attendance. Obviously, three-fourths or more of the leaders did not receive adequate training. This was true for project subject matter as well as for other areas of training need as listed in the chart below. This situation was even more extreme for first-year leaders. These are the very leaders who could not have received similar training before.

Leader-training needs	Derived from studies of needs of members	Training most commonly asked for by		Which subjects would you check as important?
		1st-year leaders	2d-year or more leaders	
How to involve all members actively in club meetings and activities	✓	✓		
How to give responsibilities to boys and girls	✓	✓		
How to inform and work with parents of members	✓		✓	
How to recognize individual achievement regardless of (written) (State) (county) requirements	✓	✓		
How to help members feel a part of the group	✓	✓		
How to help members with project work	✓		✓	
How to recognize members equitably regardless of project carried	✓			
How to recognize members for other than project work	✓			
Help with recreation		✓	✓	
How to organize and supervise clubs . .		✓		
Information about helps available for doing the job		✓		
How to inform and work with people in community		✓	✓	
Help with demonstrations		✓	✓	
Help with records		✓	✓	

Added from Western study:

- Knowledge of objectives and philosophy of 4-H Club work
- How 4-H Club work fits into extension work, land-grant college work, and the responsibilities of USDA
- How to teach
- How to plan and organize local 4-H Club activities
- Knowledge of county 4-H events and their place in the 4-H program . .
- Knowledge of contests and awards and their place in the 4-H program
- How to carry out responsibilities at county level

As earlier studies ¹ show, local leaders need or want training in many subjects. Other needs considered important by the Western State 4-H Club leaders have been added to the chart. Most of these added needs are related to the ones above them in the chart. The last column is blank. Maybe you'd like to check your own ideas there.

Agents' ideas for training meetings and those of local leaders may not always be the same. Don't expect a local leader to ask for certain kinds of training if he doesn't know he needs them.

Our study showed that 1 year's program of county training meetings did not include training in all these areas. An agent may think some or all of these areas are important to include in meetings but has not been able to solve the problem of holding enough meetings or of getting attendance at them.

HOW CAN TRAINING MEETINGS BE IMPROVED?

Use Judgment on Which Training Areas to Include

While making the study, we became more aware of the vast array of knowledge and skills now recognized as being needed by local leaders. This highlighted the fact that very few local leaders received information in needed training areas in county training meetings.

No leaders received training in all areas in meetings. Not any one county attempted to provide training in all areas in meetings.

Technical subject matter was included in three-fourths of the meetings. In about half the meetings guidance of the local 4-H Club organization, local club activities, and contests and awards were at least mentioned. In sharp contrast, in only 1 out of 16 meetings was community responsibilities mentioned. How to teach, and where 4-H fits into the total extension, land-grant college, and USDA programs, were mentioned in one-fourth of the meetings. Only one-third of the meetings included two of the basic areas of training needs; these were:

Objectives and philosophy of 4-H Club work.

Understanding boys and girls.

It seems obvious that some definite steps should be, and can be taken to make the training meeting program better, more realistic, and more practical.

In considering ways to improve leader-training meetings, let's keep the boys and girls, and their education, uppermost in mind.

The following should lead toward identifying the training needs of individual leaders so that the leader-training program can be reduced:

First, clear distinction needs to be drawn between the jobs of the volunteer leaders of a club, and the responsibilities of the extension worker, so that the boys and girls can best be served with available resources.

¹ By Joy, Clayton, Wadleigh, Copp, Clark, Harman, Sabrosky, and others.

Second, since the 4-H program is very extensive, it seems logical for a local leader to share responsibility with others—associate, assistant, and junior leaders, as well as other local adults. Each of these kinds of leaders can take different responsibilities. With these responsibilities clearly defined, each leader will not need training in all areas of training need.

Third, plan the leader-training program for several years ahead. At any given time, we hope that each 4-H Club could call upon at least one person trained in each area of need, but it might take several years for an individual leader to receive training in all areas he needs.

If we accept these three suggestions we reduce the training needs of individual leaders. This means:

1. We accept the fact that each local leader cannot be expected to know and do as much as we have often wanted him to know and do.
2. We expect each leader to attend only a part of the training meetings held—those which will help him do that part of the leadership job for which he has responsibility. This concept has been accepted for project-work areas, but has not always been recognized and accepted for such training areas as club organization, child development, and community or county responsibilities.

Every club needs trained leadership for all things—every individual leader would not need training in all things.

Take Advantage of Available Teaching Resources

The study showed that even though the county extension worker assumed a logical leading role in training meetings, there could have been greater use of other people. Practically all giving-of-information and training-in-skills were done by members of the extension "family"—county extension staff members, local leaders, and, sometimes, 4-H Club members themselves. The members of any single county extension "family" cannot be expected to be authorities in all of the large number of training areas required for the training program of effective local leaders. Even with the best of intentions and the greatest of effort, county extension workers can treat the areas of training needs adequately only with the support of State extension workers and the help of other people in the county. Doctors, nurses, State patrolmen, machinists, firemen, farmers and homemakers with special abilities, and Soil Conservation Service men are but a few examples of local people who can give needed help. A good workable plan for leader training which incorporates the help of available people will result in a more effective program for leader training.

The study showed that State extension staff members were on the training meeting programs to an adequate extent, but there are also many lay people, both professional and nonprofessional, in every county in this country who can contribute



much to 4-H work. Instead of people outside the extension "family" making some contribution at only 1 in 6 of the training meetings, as our study showed, perhaps such help could be obtained for part of many meetings, if planned for well in advance.

In addition to relieving the county extension worker of some frustration, and providing better teaching in many cases, fringe benefits would be derived from this involvement of local people:

The greater the number of people who help leaders, the greater the number who will be interested in 4-H Club work; the more they help, the more interested they will become.

Plan Better and Use Better Teaching Methods

It is quite clear that people (1) learn more when they obtain information through both ears and eyes; and (2) learn skills through practice. A great deal of research has been done which shows this to be true.

Our study showed that the talk—the people receiving information only through the ears—was by far the most common teaching method. The show-how talk was used only half as often; the demonstration was used only one-third as often. Visual aids of any kind were used in only half the meetings; the most common type was writing on the board, and this was done in only one-fourth of the meetings. Group discussions for training purposes, which truly involve all trainees, are effective if the subject is one to which they can contribute. This method was used often, but the conditions in which it was carried on were not judged. Practicing of skills at the meetings was not commonly allowed for.

Training meetings would be improved if there were more time spent in planning for them. Planning for good training takes time. Advance planning would allow more time for obtaining "outside" talent as well as for obtaining or preparing visual aids and for the planning of maximum involvement of trainees.

Nowadays, the self-administered check list or test is a common feature found in magazines and newspapers. How did your last few local leader training meetings rate?

	Yes	No
How much did <u>you</u> talk—too much?	_____	_____
Did the meeting stimulate questions even beyond purpose of meeting?	_____	_____
Did you see to it that the meeting was planned for at least several weeks in advance?	_____	_____
Did local leaders have a part in planning what was to be included?	_____	_____
Were the presentations prepared in advance?	_____	_____
Did you ask people not in the extension organization to help at the meeting?	_____	_____
Were leaders given a good chance to talk in discussions?	_____	_____
Were visual aids used?	_____	_____
Was there some physical movement or action on the part of all attending?	_____	_____
Was the meeting lively?	_____	_____
Did leaders practice what they were expected to do with their own clubs?	_____	_____
Were leaders made to feel welcome and was the atmosphere friendly and warm?	_____	_____
Did the meeting start and end on time?	_____	_____

If all except the first item are checked in the "Yes" column, look to the next section of this leaflet for clues to low attendance of leaders. Any "No" checks, except for the first item, should cause an agent to reevaluate his training meetings. Many "No" checks point toward reasons for low attendance at meetings.

Set Up Situations Which Make Better Attendance Possible

Observation of the 304 training meetings revealed that few leaders attended each training meeting. There were indications that sometimes a good-sized group, such as 30 leaders, was accepted by the agent as good attendance even though the 30 leaders comprised a small percentage of all who should have been there. Some agents have been praised by supervisors for what was shown in this study to actually be low leader attendance at training meetings.

We did not study many of the following factors, but they are mentioned here because basic research in human development and education point them up as being important.

1. **Extension agents should be concerned about reaching all leaders for whom they are responsible. They need a higher standard for leader attendance as well as for meeting content. Many agents have not analyzed their leader-training attendance situation.**
2. **Local 4-H leaders and extension workers need to feel that training meetings are important. The value level must be high enough so that time will be taken for them from other important things.**
3. **In addition, in order for attendance to increase, the following need to be done:**

- Notify leaders well in advance of training meeting times.

A planned year's program of major training meetings, including time and subjects, duplicated and given to leaders at the beginning of the year, would accomplish this.

A follow-up reminder from the county office or, preferably, from the community leader, about a week in advance, is necessary.

- Recognize that many leaders may be happy and confident in the local nature of 4-H Clubs but do not want to attend countywide meetings of adults who are strangers to them. Others do not have transportation to countywide meetings, nor find it convenient to leave home for several hours. Our study showed that less than one-fourth of the training meetings were held on a less-than-countywide basis. This raises a question about how convenient we are making leader attendance.
- Give each leader the opportunity to get training in meetings. This may well mean repeating training meetings at different times and at different places. In our study many present leaders were not leaders when the training program started. One out of five absences was related to this. Other leaders missed meetings because of such reasons as illness, company, and conflicting activities.
- Recognize that many leaders cannot always get away from home or work at the time of day when meetings are now held. Our study showed that about one-half of the meetings were held in the evening, and around one-half during the daytime. Nearly one-fourth of the meetings extended through a meal hour. General or non-project training meetings were more likely to be held in the evening—two-thirds of them. In contrast, project training meetings were more likely to be held during the daytime—three-fourths of them. How can employed leaders (including farmers and professional or business people) and those who cannot leave home during the day obtain project training?

Some people cannot attend evening meetings, even though our study showed evening meetings better attended than daytime meetings.

It seems that a solution is to repeat meetings at different places and different times if leader-training meetings are truly important. This may be accomplished by followup meetings held by trained key leaders as well as by the agent.

- Recognize that there is a limit to the number of meetings people will attend even if they can. A large majority of the people in our country do not participate in organizations because they do not like to. Many people are not meeting-attenders. Plan with them for their training. Also, good selection and orientation may encourage more leaders to attend training meetings.

Are the leaders who can and will attend meetings expected to attend too many meetings, even the best that can be held? This can be the result of the pyramiding of meetings—

(1) Leaders are asked to attend the local club meetings.

Then (2) they are asked to take members to other meetings.

Then (3) they are expected to attend training meetings.

Then (4) they are expected to belong to a countywide association and attend its meetings.

Then (5) they are asked to attend various planning meetings.

Some people like this type of activity. However, so many do not or do not have time for it that it is suggested that:

- (1) The only expected meeting attendances be those at local club meetings and leader-training meetings. A person cannot function effectively in a club leader role without these two kinds.
- (2) Training be separated from advisory, planning, and county leader association meetings.
- (3) Attendance at advisory and program planning and program action meetings be expected only of those leaders who function well in active organizational activity.
- (4) Have people who are not local club leaders among those who assist with advisory and program activity work. Some people like to do this, but do not like or have time to lead local clubs, or do not want to spend time being trained for local club leadership.

CHECK LIST FOR PLANNING A LEADER-TRAINING MEETING

	Yes	No
1. Have the leaders been informed well in advance of the date?	_____	_____
a. Has a reminder system been worked out?	_____	_____
2. Is the location most convenient for the leaders?	_____	_____
3. Is the time most convenient for them?	_____	_____
4. Are facilities at the meeting place adequate?	_____	_____
5. Are alternate dates and plans provided for another meeting if many leaders miss this one?	_____	_____
6. Have leaders been given a choice of which of two or more similar meetings they will attend?	_____	_____
7. Has some plan for advance registration gone into effect? ..	_____	_____
8. Is there variety in the program planned for the meeting? ..	_____	_____
9. Is the training to be given planned to meet unexpressed needs of the leaders as well as their expressed needs? ...	_____	_____
10. Has an effort been made to obtain the best resource people in the county for teaching?	_____	_____
11. Will leaders themselves take active roles?	_____	_____
12. Will leaders get some useful, basic ideas or presentations which are new to them?	_____	_____
13. Are useful materials ready for leaders to take home with them?	_____	_____
14. Are methods such that a leader can copy them in local clubs?	_____	_____
15. Will leaders have the opportunity to practice any skill that they are supposed to know how to do later on?	_____	_____

**Develop a more effective program for
local 4-H leader training by:**

- 1. Planning a long-time program of training meetings.**
- 2. Covering those areas of training needed most each year.**
- 3. Planning each training meeting toward a specific audience from among all leaders.**
- 4. Holding training meetings which are convenient to the leaders.**
- 5. Repeating meetings when necessary to reach all leaders needing the training covered in those meetings.**
- 6. Making use of all the best local people for the training process.**
- 7. Selecting leaders who can devote time to being trained.**
- 8. Orienting leaders to want and expect training.**

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